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Van Slot, Andy Oral History Interview: Tulip Time

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The Hope College Oral History Project for 1995
The Joint Archives of Holland

Interview #9
Mr. Andy Van Slot
The Oral History of Tulip Time

Conducted by:
Jason Valere Upchurch
23, June 1995

Oral History of Tulip TimeInterview #9

- Interview with Andy Van Slot @ his home
- 68 East 29th Street / Holland, MI 49423
- June 23, 1995
- Interviewer: Jason Valere Upchurch

Begin Tape 6 : Side A

AV: My name is Andy Van Slot and I was born in Sanborn, Iowa-- that's [the] Northwest part of the state, not in the Dutch colony part of the state, which is Sioux County, but a county next door where there weren't that many Hollanders. I call it philistine territory [laughs]. I moved to Holland after graduating from High School in 1941 with my parents so that I could attend Hope College. That's how I got into this area.

JVU: What is the nature of your association with the Tulip Time festival?

AV: Oh, this goes way back , close to forty years now. I was asked by Mr. William Vande Water--which is Randy Vande Water's father, connected with the history of Holland. He was the president, or I guess he was executive director of the Chamber of Commerce at that time. He wanted somebody to help him get sponsors for floats for Tulip Time, and I volunteered to take care of that, and I was hooked; I've been at it ever since.

JVU: Are you still active today then?

AV: I am still active. I tried to wean myself away a little bit the last couple years, but it ends up I'm still trying to get sponsors for floats. However, in the mean time, I've had the privilege [of] being on the board for a number of years and then president of the Tulip festival for several years. Of course, then passed president, and I'm still with it. Only, I try to back off a little bit. There's a lot of young people that should get involved.

JVU: How is it that you go about doing that: getting the float

sponsors and things like that, and how has it changed since you've been on?

AV: Well, first of all, the reason we have floats, is that we have to keep the bands apart. The bands don't want to march to another beat, or another drummer, so we have to have what I used to refer to as filler. It was a problem a little bit, as they increased the number of bands, to get more floats. So, we had a few companies that were very loyal and put it up, but when you get into twenty-five, thirty--it started out maybe fifteen bands, then you got up to twenty, twenty-five; now we have close to forty or fifty bands. So, we have to keep them apart. Then I got the idea that we could maybe get, as the floats were rather expensive for one or two day show, we'd consolidate sponsors; get three or four of them to sponsor a float that would have their name on it, and it ended up today--the last ten, fifteen, twenty years--we tried to get ten of them to go on, we called them then the "Industrial Floats," particular industry floats. We kind of spread the word around a little bit that it's easier to hit a guy for a hundred bucks than it is for a thousand, and we'd barter a little bit, as far as having their kids ride on it and so on, or their grandchildren--grandpas are always proud of the fact that they can get their grandkids on a float. So, it's been working very well, and it's much easier for me, because I've been at it for so many years. I get on the phone, and I've got the same list I had last year, and I say, "This is Andy making his annual Tulip Time float call."

"Fine, we're on," [they reply].

A stranger has to go through this whole . . . he don't know the guy from beans, and so the minute they here me, they say okay, or once in a while you get turned down. They say they've got a new man on the job or something, or they changed hands. We've had a lot of loyal supporters.

JVU: So you would say the main difference is, since you started doing this up till now, is the number of sponsors that you've had to get: the number of floats you've had to bring in?

AV: Oh, yeah. I start calling in February--end of March. [You have to] Watch that a little bit, because some of the decision makers are in Florida, and you have to wait till they get home. I don't want to get caught with spring vacation, because then they're out of town. So, we kind of know how to get it done.

JVU: What other areas of the festival have you been involved with?

AV: Oh, I've been involved with the start of each parade, for years. The beginning of the parade, as kind of a parade marshal.

JVU: Would this be the parade of bands then?

AV: Oh no, the Wednesday parade. The only one I don't get involved with is the children's parade. That's pretty well handled by the schools. It's pretty much tailor-made every year. But when you have floats--and we get outsiders too, coming in, you know that sponsor a float and so on. In the early ones we used to have to be careful about some people with a particular cause who wanted to get into the parade, and so at the beginning, before the parade, we looked them all over along with the parade marshal--the one in charge of the Wednesday or Saturday parade--and if we saw somebody that had something there that we didn't feel was contributing to the festival, it was "no go." Then, later on, we got sophisticated and set up parade float requirements as to size, and what they had to accomplish and so on. Then we started asking to have pictures in advance. Well, of course a lot of these groups putting up floats, they really don't know until midnight, what it's going to look like. So, we still have to kind of marshal it a little bit.

Another thing, we had to coordinate, getting there, and if they had a piece of equipment that couldn't pull it, we'd, "get off the side and make room." Once the parade starts, you don't need any gaps, because that disrupts everything. We've had some concern about people crashing the parade. We had threats from motorcycle groups or some different groups who say, "we're going to make this parade."

JVU: Any specific instances you can remember?

AV: Well, not right off hand, but we've had some. Another thing we've had trouble with, with the bands is mothers tagging along because her little boy might get tired. She's walking along with two bottles of prune juice, or something to get these kids a drink, and we don't allow that. Somebody has to be the heavy at the beginning of the parade, and say, "you're out." I've handled that fairly well.

JVU: That's an interesting story, the story about people threatening to crash the parade. Has that ever happened? Have people actually ever showed up?

AV: Well, yeah we've had some show up, something that wasn't approved.

JVU: What would be an example of something in the past that wasn't approved that you had to . . .

AV: See, a lot of communities have a parade, and we're going to have one Saturday called the [Do Da] parade here in Holland--anything goes. There's a lot of communities, they'll have a parade, they have no idea of what it's going to be like. We're very much concerned about the Tulip Festival, and the tulip is queen, and so on.

JVU: I don't remember, or I don't recall in my research, finding a date of the first year that floats were in the parade. Have they always been part of the parade?

AV: Well, I would say possibly there was something all along, because the early pushers for Tulip Time was Holland Furnace Co. I think they usually had something, and they usually had--that was actually before my time, actually before World War II--they had big name stars, and they didn't let them ride in convertibles, they went the whole nine yards, and had new floats for them.

JVU: So, Holland Furnace Co. was involved during what years?

AV: Oh, I would say the thirties up till . . . oh . . . even after a little bit after World War II.

JVU: After the Holland Furnace Co. didn't have that much involvement any more, after World War II, who were some major

contributors for floats, and honorary parade marshals, and that sort of thing?

AV: Well, it had suffered a little bit in the big names, but we did get sizable floats from the bigger industries; the furniture industry and companies in there, Parke Davis and some of those came along. The Chamber of Commerce from Zeeland always had a nice float, as Holland Chamber did. Plus, the downtown merchants used to--they don't anymore. Then the service clubs. They were more active than they are today. They really, at one time, every . . . I think every service club participated more than they do now.

JVU: You see then, that the service organizations in Holland have started to participate less and less over the years?

AV: Oh Yeah. Or, they may do it in other ways. Now, the Lions Club for example, has this chicken tent, where they serve chicken dinners, and they have had that up during the festival, and they use it as a fund raiser. A lot of service clubs will furnish ushers for the various shows. So it's not that they're out of it completely, [but] they're role is much different.

You want to remember, I can remember early--say thirty-five, forty years ago--we had a real problem getting street scrubbers, and we would approach offices around the downtown area to have their employees come to work in Dutch costumes, take time out to scrub the streets, then go back to work. I was controller at Holland Motor Express early in the game, and we used to have as many as twenty-five, thirty people from our office, go down to the beginning of the parade on the scrubbing day, and scrub streets. Then they'd get soaked and probably didn't come back to work. We had that problem, but then they changed. They were prepared for that sort of thing, but after the parade, everybody came back to work.

JVU: So that wasn't the easy way to get pout of a day of work?

AV: [laughs] No, no, we didn't write the day off. The bank and some of the service clubs used to have street scrubbers. If we had a couple hundred street scrubbers, we had a big day. Now,

we're trying to figure out how we can consolidate them, cut them down.

JVU: How would you say, besides members of community organizations, that members of the community themselves, how would you say their participation has progressed? Are they more involved now, or has it stayed about the same?

AV: Oh, I'm sure they're more involved. You want to remember, as our population grows, so does the number of kids. Everybody's got a part of the family in the parade. They're there. So, I don't see that cutting down much. In fact, much more, I think there's more people involved than there used to be. Street scrubbers particularly, man we've got two solid blocks of scrubbers now. It really goes too long. Now, we seem to be spending, giving the Governor more attention than we used to, and that takes more time. Then, we've got the politicians want to get in there, and that varies with whether it's an election year or not, and so on. We got to watch out that we're not being used. I think we have to be a little careful of that.

JVU: Alright. Holland being a Dutch community, do you think that initially, Tulip Time was brought on by a sense of Dutch pride here in Holland, or do you think that Tulip Time has caused an increase in the level of Dutch pride among the Dutch community in Holland?

AV: I think it was started more or less to express pride in the Dutch heritage; as a vehicle. This lady that started it, she said we [had] to let people know what Dutch heritage is all about. I think it's still there. It's been watered down a little bit, but it's unique and gives it it's flavor, and I think it should be paramount all the way through. If we lose that, we've lost Tulip Time. Then we get to be a regular garden variety festival. You know, I have nothing against the Blueberry or Cherry festivals, they're always the same, but it's a Cherry Festival, and it stays that way. They can change whatever the formats are, but you talk about heritage--that really doesn't change. So, if you want to express heritage, you have to stick

with the format very much, and the tulip is an important part of that.

JVU: How do you see that changing, as Holland grows more ethnically diverse? More minorities moving into Holland, so that now, the Dutchman is almost the minority in Holland. How do you see that effecting the festival?

AV: Well, it's going to be the responsibility, I think, of the board, to stick with it, and don't let it get out of hand as far as the tulip festival goes. It should be that same way twenty, thirty years from now, regardless of who's doing it. This is the way Holland started, this is what we're talking about, history. Now, I kiddingly say, we're almost in the minority, and that I think we ought to get our tax bills in Dutch, but that falls on deaf ears at City Hall. We can put Spanish all over it.

JVU: I agree that Tulip Time should stay a Dutch festival, [in that] it is a heritage festival, but how do you think the original ideas of Tulip Time that lie in community and that sort of thing, how do you think that aspect of the festival should be handled [in] incorporating the minorities who have moved into Holland?

AV: Well, they can be participants, you know, that's no problem. But don't try and make it something other than Dutch.

[Mr. Van Slot shares an example of his idea]

JVU: Which people, or maybe what organizations do you see behind keeping the Dutch heritage of Tulip Time alive, both now and in the past especially?

AV: It's going to be the leaders of the community who do that, regardless of their background.

JVU: Have there been any people in the past who have specifically been on the . . .

AV: In the leadership role?

JVU: Yes, in the leadership of keeping the Dutch heritage alive?

AV: Oh yeah, I would say Dr. Wichers. He was a big push in the

heritage angle. He maintained the Dutch connection with the embassy. He was serving a dual role. He was part of the Dutch Embassy there, and he used that influence very powerfully. You ought to remember, the early Tulip Time boards were just a very limited number of people, maybe a half a dozen. The Chamber of Commerce was represented, City Hall, the Newspaper at that time had one, Dr. Wichers, and maybe one other, a community person. The rest of the people functioned just as subordinate committees or whatever, like myself. We could attend the meeting, but didn't have a thing to say until after the meeting was over. Then they'd say, "Okay now you people that are doing the light work and so on, do you have anything to say? Any contributions, whatever, questions?"

That went on until maybe twenty years ago, then they started . . . oh, one other, the schools were represented because of the Dutch dance and so on. That five or six people pretty much determined what was going on in Tulip Time, and it worked very well at that time. As we go into more shows, more activities, trying to go into the tourist thing, then you have to expand that.

JVU: Would you say that that's the area that most of the changes you've seen in Tulip Time falls into? The size of the festival, and that sort of thing?

AV: It's like everything else. If you invite people to your place--your home or anywhere--you invite them. Then you have to entertain them, and then you have to feed them and lodge them. You just don't get them here then drop them, and say well you're on your own. We'd fall flat. So, we ran into the lodging situation, and we handled that with the homes, opening them. We had the hotels and places, but this home activity was very big at one time. We had two, three hundred homes that were inviting people in. When you did that, the next thing you had to do was have somebody in charge to look those people over so that the people coming here wouldn't fall into a place that they thought, "I don't want to sleep here," you know. So, we had an inspector,

or someone in charge of housing see.

Then we ran into entertainment. When you're here, okay, our streets were folding up at eight, nine o'clock; there wasn't too much to do, so we had to figure out programs, and the High School started a variety show. Our first ones came out of Battle Creek for example, and they put on such a good show that our local band people, and music people said, "Why, we can do a show like that," and we got into that.

JVU: Do you know about what year that was that the shows started like that?

AV: Oh, I'd say in the sixties. What happened is that, the first one I can remember with a High School participating in a variety show, was: Battle Creek High School put on for their own benefit, in Battle Creek, a variety show, showing the talents of their High School, and it [was] terrific. So, the band leader, or the leadership of that group thought, "Hey, schools on, May, where can we show this off?" So, they got a hold of I think Nels Bosman at that time, and we ended up with a variety show, and it went over big. We sold tickets in advance you know, just like we do now, and they filled that auditorium, and the kids were terrific.

Well, like I said, our local people weren't going to be outdone like that. So it's been on ever since, and I admire the leadership that, particularly Cal [Langjeans] . . . here's a man that can take all these band leaders, and choral group leaders who are very conscious of their own turf, he can get them all to work together and put on a show like he does. Because he has to say, "This one don't go," or "that one." We've got to limit it to an hour and a half or something like that. Everybody think they've got the best act in town, and he can get everybody to cooperate. He puts on a terrific show. Now that's been going on for I think about twenty years.

The next thing you've got to do, we had the housing, then we had to feed them. The restaurants couldn't handle them. Now, they were breaking china just trying to serve a house full

of people. You had to have help and so on. So we got into the service groups. The Lit club started feeding them, in their literary club. Then the various churches started. Then the High School. Christian High started, or opened up their cafeteria so when the buses come in. Now, that's synchronized almost to a time schedule. This bus comes in at ten-fifty or eleven-fifty, and another one's served. They run them through like they're on a conveyor belt. But they really serve a lot of meals here.

Then, another interesting personal sideline to this thing; all these people are in town, and the only rest rooms available were the gas stations, and some of the stores. This is a real problem. It was only a three-day affair, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, but there was line-ups for rest rooms everywhere you went. Nels Bosman approached me, and I happened to be in business at that time in underground construction--we did a lot of drain fields and that kind of work--and he says, "Andy," he says, "we got to do something about this rest room business," and he prevailed upon me to check that out, and I ended up in the portable toilet business in Western Michigan. We set up the first . . . well, fortunately, you can't start a business on a three-day show, you know. Fortunately, consumer's power decided to build a big power plant here, and they approached me about the same time, and wanted somebody locally here to be in the portable toilet business, sort of a new industry at that time practically--before that it was just a matter of building an outhouse on the job, and that was it. So, we got into the toilet business, and that was a big relief to all the stores.

JVU: Literally.

AV: Literally [laughs]. We sold relief. So, today I think they rent two, three hundred toilets. But, it solved a problem. See how this thing progresses? Now we get more and more busses, so we have to have more and more parking. Now we have tour guides that get on these busses, and tell them a story, and it goes on and on.

JVU: How do you feel, personally, about all the tourists that come into Holland for Tulip Time? Some people put up a stink about it.

AV: Yeah. I don't care if it's . . . what it is, there's a certain amount of people that are going to be--anything that's other than the daily routine that they're on, it's bad. They're used to putting their left shoe on first, you know, and don't disrupt anything. I think it's been a tremendous asset to the community as far as . . . it has one advantage, and I've said this many times: If you--are you married?

JVU: No.

AV: Anybody that has a family, or married and lives at home and invites a guest, the house gets a clean sweep. Everything gets spit and polished, and you're going to have your party. Now, this happens to Holland every spring. We're going to invite guests, and it creates a deadline. We have clean-up day in April. Everything that's got to be done, has got to be done by Tulip Time, if it's a sign, or a window repair, or a paint, or anywhere around town, anybody connected with the community, it's got to be done by Tulip Time, and our place gets cleaned up. It stays that way through the rest of the year. Now, if we didn't have that, we'd be just like every place else, nothing gets done, doesn't face the deadline. Or like a fellow I used to fly with during World War II comes up here--he's from Mississippi--he says, "I can't believe it, Andy," he says, "you guys can paint three months a year, everything's painted." He says, "We can paint twelve months a year and nothing gets painted." Because they can always do it. We can't paint in the winter time, so we have to. But we have Tulip Time, and so it's got to get done, and that's an unmeasurable asset to this community. You look at our streets, all the markings on the pavements are always done. Or when they even issue contracts to work on something in Holland, it's got to be done before Tulip Time, or after Tulip Time. I mean it's . . . we're having guests.

JVU: That's been the attitude of the community all along you

think?

AV: It started that. You know, you can call it pride--we have a project pride--and that's what it is. That's why the grass gets mowed. Now, I have a feeling that we're losing a little of that. We've got people parking all over the place. Now we've got to face that, we've never faced that before. The regulations were there, and everybody abided by them. Now you rent an apartment to one single person, he invites three people to live with him, so you've got four cars, and that creates some problems. We've got regulations to take care of that, but we've got to do it.

And the money, we always talk in terms of money, but that's a result of something. Financial reward comes as a result of either doing a good job, or providing the entertainment, or feeding the people, and they come back. I get around quite a bit--involved with some various things around the country--and you tell [people] you're from Holland, Michigan, everyone knows it. They've heard of it. Then they say, "Oh yeah, I'm going to get there some day." Now do you . . . I don't think we have to kick that in the teeth. We should build on that. You talk with the bus drivers that come here, and I've dealt with a lot of that, because I'm always kind of curious whether we're doing the job right, and they'll say, "Hey, you guys take care of bus drivers. You give them directions." At our Civic Center or anyplace else, our stops, they've got a place where they can have a cup of coffee or whatever. They say, "We don't [usually] get that." It's important.

JVU: So you think all these different factors add up to a positive experience for the tourists that come here?

AV: Oh yeah. And the best thing that anybody can do, is get involved. Then it gets exciting. For example, the Dutch dance: first there was just Holland High that had Dutch dancers. The kids loved it, and the other schools said, "Hey, we want Dutch dancers." Holland Christian got it. Zeeland--now they're neighbors--they have Dutch dancers in there. And Hamilton. I was involved on the board when all of these things popped up,

because it has to get approval. So, West Ottawa got involved, then Hamilton, and so afterwards the [dancers] got out of High School, now we have alumni [dancers] that's bigger than anything. Every year, the school system gets a whole new batch of kids, they're all looking forward to that day. So, it will expand.

JVU: My next question--it's not really changing the subject I guess--are there any people that you specifically relate to Tulip Time from the past. You mentioned Bill Wichers . . .

AV: Nels Bosman. He was the mayor, and he had a vital interest in the radio station. He took care of and furnished the sound system on Eighth Street for years. He got older, but he knew how to keep it going, and when he got to the point where we realized we had to do something--Tulip Time to set up a sound system that we could say was ours, or belonged to Tulip Time and downtown merchants or whatever; now we have people that can take care of it--but he was a big help. And Vande Water, and the Chamber has always been active. Tulip Time really comes under the Chamber, and the Chamber has always got their executive on their, on the board, and maybe one or two others. Lou Hallacy has always been very positive. Lou, and Dale Van Lente years ago was very active in it, along with Roger Stroh from City Hall--he's been around for many years. He has been able to get things from the city. Our police department has always been involved; they've been very cooperative.

This is a real, real burden for them that week, but they just figure it goes with the territory. They take care of it, and we're very thankful for that. Mrs. Dick was the Dutch dance gal. Betty Dick. She seemed rather strict as far as costumes and all that sort of thing, and she let them know that you don't get out of hand, and that the discipline was there.

JVU: Do you have any specific personal memories of dealing with any of those people?

AV: Yeah. The parades I have some memories of. One of the fastest parades we ever had was when we had a tornado warning. That's not too many years ago, maybe ten or fifteen years ago.

Came out about Saturday afternoon, about noon, they said there was a tornado warning. Okay, you've got thousands of people there, what do you do? You can't send them home and have bedlam. So, we were in very close contact with--I think I was president that year--we had close contact with the weather bureau and so on, and what do we do, take a chance? I said the parade started at three, and we're getting out of here. We warned everybody, told them, "No monkey business, you've got to get to your busses anyway. Your busses are on that end of town, you're here. We got to get this thing out of the way." I never saw a parade move as fast as that one. And they did a good job, you know. They didn't run, but there was no fancy dancing or anything in between waiting for somebody. It moved and we were out of there, and fortunately nothing happened. But there was no chaos. If you try to tell everybody over the speaker system, everybody head for a big ditch or something? Why, we'd have had people laying in the hospital knee deep, you know.

One other incident--that I think it was president Ford--I'm sure secret service over there in Washington saw their assignment, and says there's a parade in Holland, Michigan, and [Gerald] Ford's coming, and they look at the map--little burgh there, and I'm sure they said, "This is routine." So their advance man looked the parade [route] two or three months ahead of time, I'm sure they got a set procedure of what they do/. Probably thirty days before the parade, he rode down Eight Street, and made the report, "Yeah, three blocks long . . . piece of cake." Well, that Saturday morning, the secret service men came in here with their positions and where they were supposed to be for the parade route, and already there were thousands of people milling around downtown. Come about noon, then they start seeing people taking perches above the buildings, and of course this is after Dallas, and they were beside themselves. [They said,] "We got to hold everything up, all the people got to evacuate the second stories,"

And I said, "Hey, there's no way you're going to do

that. This is a Holland festival, its been this way all it's life, Ford knows about it, he's been here before. You can look them over. They were checking with the police department. They tried to get some of them off the roof. I think they got some of the kids off the roof, but they were . . . their Right Guard was giving out long before the parade, and they wanted to stop it. I said, "Hey, this parade starts at three o'clock." They finally calmed down, but they were very uneasy. [But we were] going ahead. We did, and everything went fine, but they just had no idea that we were going to get a couple hundred thousand people around here for that affair, and I think they were mighty glad when he got back on that airplane heading for Washington. That's another incident, but we've had some others.

We had . . . I remember one time: I have nothing against the Cancer Society, remember that, but one year they wanted to put in a coffin on a cart, that says, "STOP SMOKING," or something to that effect. They were dead serious you know, but that was one of the things we had to decide at the beginning of the parade. We have a captive audience here that's come for a festival. We're not going to jam some pet project down their throat, or take advantage of the situation.

Another incident was: A man had a panel truck from the middle of the state somewhere. He had all different texts on it, Bible texts, and a message of course. I'm not against religion or anything, in fact I'm a laborer in church activities and so on. He wanted to be in the parade, and I said, "No way, it doesn't fit any of the categories we have."

"Well, I've been in every parade in the state of Michigan, and I don't understand how I can be kept out of this one."

I said, "Well, you're out of it." Then his tactics were, he wrote every church consistory around here, about the devil taking over the Tulip Time parade. [laughs] And I actually got calls from several people around here from the Reformed Church and different churches from around here. They said,

"Andy, what's the story here?" And I explained, and they said, "That's fine, no problem." But, see what happens if you just buckle. See, this is a tulip festival. The tulip is what we're talking about, the Dutch heritage. And the Dutch heritage is very rich in religion, but it's not a place for that. Now our churches have various floats in there, and they give a message, but it's not just a plain truck. Things like that, and every year there's something.

JVU: Well, other than Tulip Time trying to be taken over by the devil one year, what are some other challenges that it's faced?

AV: Well, weather is a big challenge. A beautiful day like we had this year, a week we had this year, everybody is docile and they're comfortable, and they enjoy it. But if there's dark skies and everything else, the band leaders are irritable because they got new uniforms this year and they don't want to get them wet. Just paid the bill on the thigs, you know, we got to dry clean them. Housing was another thing. Hope College actually lets school out early so that their dorms are available, and that was another thing that brought on the fact that we added all these bands. The schools have a place to go. They can kick up in a dorm or one floor, and they house the kids. However, I think Hope's doping a little recruiting too. I'm sure that there are more band kids that have never heard of Hope College before, and are getting a pretty good picture of the place. That type of thing.

So, getting back to what Tulip Time is to Holland, it's big.

JVU: Over the years, what has Tulip Time meant to you personally. Could you sum it up in a few words or so?

AV: Well, it's been fun. Now, the day that the festival isn't fun for everybody that works at it, we're in trouble. But it's fun because we get the cooperation and it's a good clean activity. We don't have all the big problems; unruliness, or disorderly conduct, or anything like that. And flowers, I mean nature, beauty is a creation, and we have it all. This year too,

all our trees were blooming at the same time. So, it's taking something that's very beautiful and natural and working with it.

And kids, they're big participants. From kindergarten on, they look forward to it. So we have to remember, maybe this kid by the time he's a senior says, "Hey, I've had enough of this," that kid in the eighth grade is coming up with the idea, "Hey, I'm ready for this." We don't want to disappoint them. So, it's been a lot of work at times, but it's been a lot of fun.

JVU: My last question is: What is your favorite part of Tulip Time?

AV: My favorite part of Tulip Time? I can't say I really . . . My favorite part, I would say, is the shows put on by our local talent. Including the chorale, and the High School. My question has always been: Without the vehicle, will we ever see the town? And I doubt it, and that's why I think some time we should have a bigger auditorium; another one so we can still display more talent. This is what impresses most people who come here, is the factor that our local judge is up there singing or acting, and the state policeman is imitating Elvis Presley, all that stuff.

-End Side A-

Begin Tape #6 : Side B

JVU: You were just answering the question: What is your favorite part of Tulip Time. If you could just give the last part again.

AV: It's about the talent. Grade school, starting with the parades, kids in school, and then your song and dance kids, and then they progress to everything else, and that's been, I think, my most enjoyable. I have friends here--try to get people from various areas that I was with, somewhere from out of town--and they can't believe it, how this all goes.

Another one I think was when one of our governors--I can't think of his name right now [Blanchard]--got into office. His staff didn't know their politics too well. He was asked to participate in Tulip festival, way in January, right after he

took office, and they thought about it, and in the letter they included they wanted to know the size he would take so they could make him a Dutch costume. The staff said, "Our governor is not going to be showing up in a Dutch costume." And they turned it down. One of the local representatives cornered him and said, "Hey, you want to remember that this goes way back to Williams, Governor Williams, and all that." And then they really didn't know what to make of that, but doing a little research they come around and said, "Okay." But they were still apprehensive about it.

Well then, it so happened he went to [another Michigan festival], and being a democrat, they threw stones at him and everything else practically. He had a bad time. So, the following week or two, he was coming to Holland, and of course we've always prided ourselves on Dutch hospitality. Here, in Republican territory of the state, greeted him with open arms, and showed him hospitality he'd never seen before. Well, I want you to know, the next year they said, "When is Tulip Time?" They were going to make sure he was here. He got his reception, and everybody had a good time.

-End of Interview-